UNITED NATIONS

Daily Highlights

Department of Public Information • Central News Section • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/2072
1 February 1996

THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

* Italian Ambassador says proposals to enlarge Security Council should consider interests, aspirations and potential contribution of all non-permanent Members.

* Secretary-General deplores loss of life in Sri-Lanka bombing.

* Only $72 million received in response to $169 million appeal for humanitarian aid for Iraq, as conditions in country deteriorate.

* Secretary-General appoints Special Representative and Coordinator of United Nations operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

* World Food Summit to be held at FAO headquarters in Rome in November.

* Report on raped, widowed and landless women in Rwanda presented to Committee on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women.

* UNCTAD's Secretary-General says its focus should be on central development issues where there can be real impact, especially in least developed countries.

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There was no consensus between the countries of the European Union on Security Council reform, according to the Permanent Representative of Italy, Francesco Paolo Fulci. He told correspondents today that enlargement of the Council was the most divisive issue in United Nations reform and the positions of different countries were very far apart and very entrenched. Outlining a number of proposals, he said one "quick fix" was to assign additional permanent seats to two industrialized countries from the northern hemisphere. Another, the "two plus three formula", proposed assigning two additional seats to northern countries and one each to Asia, Africa and Latin America.

A more radical formula to address the present imbalance in the Council, proposed assigning additional permanent seats only to developing countries, which his country opposed. Mr. Fulci said the best way to combat a state of "eternal

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privilege" was not to extend that privilege to other countries, because it would only demoralize and discourage those who made sizable contributions in funding and troops to the United Nations. A range of other ideas fell in the "great middle way". Italy had proposed a compromise that took into account the interests, aspirations and potential contributions of the greatest possible number of countries -- the 180, who were not permanent members of the Council.

The Council must be brought into step with the modern world, Ambassador Fulci continued. Since the last reform of the Council, some 30 years ago, 100 or so former colonies had become full-fledged members of the Organization and a democratic solution must be found to address that situation. Care should be taken not to open old wounds and revive the north south confrontation. Members must strive for a truly democratic reform not an elitist one. He said Italy, which was the sixth largest contributor to the United Nations regular budget, had paid its 1996 dues of $57,440,000, as well as approximately $72 million to the peace-keeping budget. In 1998, Italy would become the fifth largest contributor to the regular budget, paying more than three present permanent Council members, including the United Kingdom.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali today expressed dismay over the loss of life in Wednesday's bombing in Colombo, Sri Lanka, a United Nations spokesman said. The Secretary-General deplored acts that targeted civilians and stressed the need to find an early negotiated political solution to Sri Lanka's conflict, which continued to inflict great suffering on the country.

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The response to a United Nations humanitarian appeal for Iraq has been extremely limited, with only $72 million pledged to a revised appeal for $169.3 million, according to the Department of Humanitarian Affairs. Delegates to a Geneva meeting of various UN agencies stressed that conditions were deteriorating in Iraq, particularly in the central and southern parts of the country, where food aid and health related requirements were increasing. They appealed urgently to donor governments to provide funding for humanitarian assistance for Iraq.

The agencies expressed serious concern over the rapidly widening gap between growing needs among the most vulnerable sectors of the Iraqi population and the international community's shrinking financial contributions to the humanitarian programme in the country. A substantial amount of aid up to the end of last year has been funded from frozen Iraqi assets deposited in the United Nations Escrow Account. Additional funds are unlikely to be made available from that account, thus affecting many ongoing assistance programmes.

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The Secretary-General has appointed Iqbal Riza as his Special Representative and Coordinator of United Nations operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Mr. Riza, of Pakistan, has been Assistant Secretary-General in the Department of Peace-keeping Operations since March 1993. Previously, he was the Secretary-General's Special Representative and Chief of the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL). He will leave for Sarajevo over the weekend.

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A climate of peace must be established in Rwanda before there could be true reconciliation for its 500,000 widowed women and 400,000 orphaned children, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women was told yesterday. Rwanda's Director for the Promotion of Women, Venantie Mukarugomwa, said many had been raped, physically disabled and forced to witness killings of family members in the carnage which engulfed the country in 1994. Others had become infertile because of botched abortions and most women had no access to health facilities.

Under customary law in Rwanda, women could not inherit land and a majority had encountered extreme difficulty in retaining their property after the death of their male relatives, she said. Moreover, 67 per cent of women were illiterate. Legislation was being reformed to enable women to own land.

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A World Food Summit will be held at the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Headquarters in Rome from 13 to 17 November. The meeting of Heads of State and Government will aim for a global commitment on policies and strategies to eradicate hunger worldwide. There is growing international concern about declining world cereal production, rising costs and a drop in food aid supplies. Some 800 million people in the developing world, 200 million of them women and children, were chronically undernourished. Millions more suffered debilitating diseases because of nutritional deficiencies and contaminated food and water.

World food production will have to increase by more than 75 per cent over the next 30 years to keep pace with population growth, according to the FAO's Director-General, Jacques Diouf. "It is unacceptable that hunger and malnutrition continue to diminish the human potential of nearly 20 per cent of the people on earth in an age when we explore the planets and beyond." he said. The very survival of humanity depends on world food security. Practical solutions at the national and international level could dramatically alter the future course of hunger, he said and proposed increased production for self-sufficiency in areas where food is needed most.

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The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) should focus more sharply on important development issues where it could have an impact, according to UNCTAD's Secretary-General Rubens Ricupero. In a report for the UNCTAD IX Conference, which will be held in South Africa in April, he said his organization could foster growth, reduce inequality and build capacity to improve the lives of half the world's population, especially in the least developed countries (LDCs). Greater involvement by the private sector, transnational companies, private investors, non-government organizations, universities and research centres could make UNCTAD a model agency for the twenty-first century.

Mr. Ricupero said the objective of the Conference was to maximize the benefits of globalization, which would allow two billion people in developing countries to participate actively in the world economy, while helping millions more avoid being shut out from the "promise of prosperity." About 2,500 participants, led by ministers from all countries, are expected to attend the Conference.

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